

The Wisconsin Parental Choice

Program *allows students who reside in a Wisconsin school district, other than the Milwaukee or Racine Unified School District, to attend any participating private school if certain eligibility criteria are met. The private school, on behalf of the pupil's parent or guardian, receives a state aid payment for each eligible student. Contact the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for the list of schools participating in the program. You may also access the program's webpage at: <http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/wpcp-statewide>.*

Payment of Allowable Fees

A private school may charge a Choice student reasonable fees for personal items such as towels, gym clothes or uniforms, social and extracurricular activities if the activity is not a part of the required curriculum, musical instruments, meals, and high school classes not required or credited for graduation. A Choice student cannot be charged fees for registration or application to the Choice program, books, teacher salaries, buildings, maintenance, equipment, computers, or transportation if required to be provided or reimbursed by the school district.

Special Education Services

A Choice school may not discriminate against a child with special needs during the admissions process or elsewhere. However, as a private school, the Choice school is only required to offer those services to assist students with special needs that it can provide with minor adjustments. Parents should contact the public school district in which the private school is located for more information on the services provided to children with special needs enrolled in the public schools and the lesser services that school district provides those children enrolled in private schools.

Student Participation Limits

For the 2013-14 school year, the program is limited to 500 FTE (full-time equivalent) pupils statewide. In addition, no more than 1% of the pupil membership of a school district may attend a participating private school. If more than 500 students apply to participate in the program, only the 25 schools with the most applicants are eligible to participate in the program. Each of the 25 schools will be allocated 10 seats for choice students by random selection with preference given to siblings. The remaining 250 seats will be filled randomly, with sibling preference, with applicants to the 25 schools.

Student Eligibility

Students in grades kindergarten through 12 residing in a Wisconsin school district, other than the Milwaukee or Racine Unified School District, may apply for the Choice program at a participating private school during a period the school is accepting Choice applications. Students new to the program must meet the income requirements. To qualify for the program in the 2013-14 school year, a new student must have a family income equal to or less than 185% of the federal poverty level income limits shown below. If the child's parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program.

185% of the Federal Poverty Level 2013-14 Maximum	
Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$21,201
2	\$28,718
3	\$36,235
4	\$43,752
For each additional member add \$7,517.	

All students must apply each year and provide documentation that they meet the residency requirements. Students continuing in the program or students that were on the waiting list at a choice school in the prior year are not required to provide income documentation.

How to Apply

The first, and possibly only, application period for the 2013-14 school year is from **August 1-August 9, 2013. This application period closes at 4:00 p.m. on August 9, 2013. Late applications will not be accepted for any reason.** If more than 500 students apply during this application period, there will be no additional open application periods. Parents must complete the on-line student application on the following webpage: <http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/wpcp-statewide>.

In addition to completing the on-line student application, parents must provide residency documentation and income documentation directly to the school(s) they apply to during the application period or their application is ineligible. Parents/guardians may either: (a) provide their social security numbers or taxpayer identification number and have the Department of Revenue determine whether the student is income eligible for the program as part of the on-line application; or (b) use the Department of Public Instruction's income determination method by answering a series of income questions in the on-line application and providing paper income documentation to the school(s) as directed in the application during the open application period. The school will verify that the student meets the income requirements. Applicants must also provide proof of residency directly to the schools during the open application period. A student can apply to the Choice program at one or more schools during the open application period(s).

The school cannot use grades, test scores, or other factors besides eligibility for the program in admitting Choice students. It is recommended that parents keep in touch with the school to receive the latest information regarding their application.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1 Can the Choice school require fundraising and school service of the Choice parent?

A.1 A school may not impose any penalties on a parent or child in the Choice program for failure to engage in fundraising (which would include any required service to the school).

Q.2 Is transportation available in the Choice program?

A.2 A private Choice school is not required to provide transportation to Choice students. If the school chooses to provide transportation, a fee may be charged. In some cases, the school district will provide transportation or pay the parent a certain amount for their transportation costs through a contract. Check directly with the private school you plan to attend or the public school district.

Q.3 How does the payment process work?

A.3 The state issues payments to the school where the child is enrolled in the Choice program (a check in September and November based on student attendance on the 3rd Friday in September and a check in February and May based on student attendance the 2nd Friday in January).

Q.4 Is a child in the Choice program at a private religious school required to participate in religious activities or instruction?

A.4 No. If a Choice student's parent or guardian submits to the student's teacher or the school's principal a written request that the student be excused from any religious activity, the teacher and school must honor that request.

Q.5 Are there statutory procedures regarding student suspensions and expulsions that a private Choice school is required to follow?

A.5 Yes. State law requires private Choice schools to have procedures in place regarding student suspensions and expulsions. Parents should ask the Choice school they are considering for their child to provide a copy of the procedures the school has in place for imposition of or appeal of suspensions or expulsions.

For more information contact:

Private School Choice Programs
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841
Toll-free: 888-245-2732, ext. 3
Email: PrivateSchoolChoice@dpi.wi.gov
Web site: <http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/wpcp-statewide>.



2013-14

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2013-14 School Year

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Information for Parents

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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